

FOREWORD

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John Smith (interviewee), recorded interview by
Bill Jones (interviewer), date, page, John F. Kennedy
Library Oral History Program

Oral History Interview

with

ROSWELL L. GILPATRIC

May 5, 1970
New York, New York

By Dennis J. O'Brien

For the John F. Kennedy Library

O'BRIEN: Well, I think the logical place to begin is, when was the first time you met President Kennedy--or John Fitzgerald Kennedy, I should say?

GILPATRIC: While I was the under secretary of the Air Force during the Korean War, and he was a congressman from Massachusetts. He was interested at that time in air power, and he did a good deal in the way of support of various programs, projects, that the Air Force had before the Congress, even though he was not on the Armed Services Committee. As a result, when he was running against Henry Cabot Lodge for the senatorial office during '52, he asked me for a testimonial as to his work, and that's the first time I had any contact with him.

O'BRIEN: What were your impressions of him at that point? Was he just another congressman?

GILPATRIC: No, I had the feeling that he had a lot ahead of him. I thought he showed a sensitivity to what were the important issues and problems, which was quite unusual for a freshman congressman. He was several cuts above the level of his colleagues.

O'BRIEN: In the 1950's, after you left the Department of Defense, did you have any other contacts with him, political associations?

GILPATRIC: Only during the '56 campaign when I was the state treasurer for the Citizens for Edlai E. Stevenson-Estes Kefauver in Connecticut, and Kennedy came down to speak, and we talked there. But I did see him socially,

O'BRIEN: When are you first informed of the presence of the missiles in Cuba? /Interruption/ Well, we left off, and you were discussing when and how you were first informed about the Cuban missile crisis.

GILPATRIC: It was evident to us at the very beginning that this was not an ambiguous signal; we were dealing with a very major, significant development, and the implications were evident from the start.

O'BRIEN: Do you recall some of the discussions that you had that evening with General Taylor and U. Alexis Johnson?

GILPATRIC: The only thing that stands out in my memory is our concern about the executive branch organizing itself and how to deal with this on a kind of a crash basis. And we felt then, although we weren't in direct communication with the White House on it, that there ought to be a small group immediately charged with doing nothing else but pursuing this particular matter. And I think Taylor was, if I recall it, emphasizing what he felt was the need for a military response. His thoughts ran in the line of, at that stage, taking out the weapons and being, really, a military operation. I didn't have any clear--I don't recall having any clear conclusions on that; I just felt it was obviously going to be a joint effort.

O'BRIEN: Did you talk to McNamara that night?

GILPATRIC: Yes. I called him when I got back to my quarters, but I don't recall that he saw the photographs until the next morning. When I came in around 7:30, he was already in, and he had /Joseph F./ Joe Carroll and his people up there with the pictures. And I joined them at that time, around 7:30.

O'BRIEN: What was his thinking at that point, or was he saying much?

GILPATRIC: He was very--I won't say shaken, but he was very grave and had that sort of taut look that I came to recognize when something came upon him that he just felt he couldn't, you know, handle, didn't have any immediate solution for. And we were still discussing the implications to be drawn from these pictures when the White House phone rang, and we had word to come over to the White House. If I recall, it was around 11 o'clock. And that's all we did that morning. I think Max Taylor came up, and we all went over together.

O'BRIEN: Did you talk to McGeorge Bundy at all that evening or early that morning?

GILPATRIC: No, I didn't. Joe Carroll told me that he was going to get to Mac Bundy or Carl--I guess Carl Kaysen was there then--in the course of the evening and that those who should be in the know would be told before morning. I didn't talk to Mac Bundy until we got to the White House. McNamara talked to him on the phone after he--well, he got the first word.

O'BRIEN: Was there any particular reason why the air reconnaissance was taken at the time that it was? Did you have any hints that these missiles might have been developed from . . .

GILPATRIC: Well, several months before that we'd had up before this 54-12 group the frequency of flights over Cuba and the patterns of the flights. And we'd had a lot of argument and debate. And we'd had, as now recorded, a lot of frustrated missions because of weather. We'd been getting needled through Senator Kenneth B. Keating and others in the press, particularly the Florida press, that a lot of things were going on that the government didn't seem to take notice of. So there was a great deal of sensitivity, indeed tension, about what these flights would develop, what these reconnaissance flights would develop. Then we'd had a jurisdictional argument between CIA and the Air Force which finally had to be resolved by Mac Bundy. McCone was away. Carter and I argued back and forth. What's-his-name William B. Coolidge was in on the act, too. Finally, Mac Bundy decided that the Air Force should conduct the flights. I think this was in September. But there was a lot of preliminary buildup in terms of assorted activities which didn't come into focus, of course, until October.

O'BRIEN: Well, in all this prior period of conflict over that, did you ever make any attempt or did Senator Keating ever make any attempt to share his sources that he was getting his information from?

GILPATRIC: Yes. We had the military liaison people on the Hill go to see him repeatedly, and he never would divulge his sources and was obviously playing his own game. And I never did know, other than my suspecting that he had some Florida newspaper correspondents who were feeding him what he got.

O'BRIEN: Well, there's a rather interesting story that came out several weeks ago, which you may or may not have heard. Basically, it's this: that the assassinated German ambassador to Guatemala, Earl Von Spreti,

had been one of Keating's sources.

GILPATRIC: No, I didn't see that.

O'BRIEN: Well, you may want to read that. This is the news script that came out on him.

GILPATRIC: He was in Havana in late September of '62. Well, it wouldn't be surprising because a number of times when the agency didn't pay heed to this kind of intelligence, volunteered intelligence, it got to the press or it got to some congressman. And that wasn't limited to the agency; it was limited to things that were told to the military. We see them in Drew Pearson's column or Jack Anderson's. They pick up something that had been shopped around, in effect, and whose credence had been suspected or denied, and so the person went further.

O'BRIEN: What do you recall of the president's reactions in that initial meeting you had on the crisis?

GILPATRIC: Well, he was very clipped, very tense. I don't recall a time when I saw him more preoccupied and less given to any light touch at all. The atmosphere was unrelieved by any of the usual asides and change of pace that he was capable of. He seemed to me to believe that the Soviets meant business in the most real sense, and this was the biggest national crisis he'd faced.

So the feeling I had and the feeling that McNamara certainly had was that nothing else mattered, and this was the only thing that we should be thinking about. And when we'd adjourned that afternoon over to the State Department, we established this modus operandi of having our meetings there and without the presence of the president, but with Bobby Kennedy always present and in a passive but clearly recognized sense the president's alternate. That was to be the line of communication except for the few meetings we had with the president, particularly later in the week, when he returned from Chicago.

O'BRIEN: Any insight into why the president chose the people he did and set up the ExComm [Executive Committee of the National Security Council] in the manner in which he did?

GILPATRIC: No, except, it seemed to me, that the people he picked were those that he'd been increasingly, during the prior year and a half, turning to, with whom he was familiar. He developed the habit of not just confining himself to the head of a particular department or

agency, but picking people that he felt often, because of their seniority or place in the hierarchy, could contribute. But I never knew how he arrived at this particular list. It grew somewhat. For example, initially, Paul Nitze was not a member of the group from the Defense Department, but he joined the group, I think, in a day or so.

O'BRIEN: Did you and Nitze and Secretary McNamara ever try to work things out between you before going into the meetings, or were you pretty much free to. . . .

GILPATRIC: Well, McNamara and I, because we spent so much time together--we had breakfast and lunch together practically every day, particularly lunch--we did a lot of the war gaming. But to develop this cleavage between the two of us on the one hand and Paul on the other hand, he from the beginning was a hard-liner, a hawk. And he died rather hard on that. I don't know whether he really in his heart ever became convinced of the merits of the proposal that ultimately the president followed. But he didn't sit down with McNamara and me as much as the two of us did. And we didn't do it by design; it was just the way we operated over there, being check by jowl.

And so really the members of ExComm were there as individuals. And after all, C. Douglas Doug Dillon didn't have any constituency; he was just there as an individual. And, of course, Dean G. Acheson was there briefly, and Charles E. Chip Bohlen until he left. There was some coming and going during the course of that period.

O'BRIEN: Well, I'm rather intrigued by this war gaming that you did with Secretary McNamara. Was it just a matter of talking in terms of what you would do, simulation in a sense?

GILPATRIC: Yes. We spent about two and a half hours one day at lunch, after lunch, arranging ourselves, he being the United States and I being the Soviet Union, and making a series of moves and countermoves and what our reaction would be. And it was during that session that McNamara became convinced that this limited form of blockade, quarantine, was the best move. It evolved from this back and forth gaming. Not in all of its details, but it was pretty much set in his mind. He never shifted from that ground from that point on.

O'BRIEN: Well, this gaming must have been based on some assumptions as to why the Soviet Union were doing, at that point, what they were doing. Now what . . .

GILPATRIC: Well, at that stage, see, we had a number of appreciations, assessments, and position papers prepared by a series of people: Alexis Johnson, others in the State Department, General Taylor. I guess we'd all come up with some rather crude formulations, models, and so we had, even though they're all very closely held, we had a certain body of data, of, as you say, assumptions, hypotheses. And we had a lot of discussion. This wasn't until the latter part of that week. I would say it was about Thursday. Yeah, it must have been Thursday. And we had seen two full days of discussion and sleeping and eating and drinking the whole problem. So we'd explored every, you know, possible hypothesis as to what this meant.

Dut neither McNamara nor I agreed with the other view, that the Soviet Union was out to change the balance of power, because we were convinced that whether their missiles came from Cuba or whether they came from the heartland of Soviet Russia or whether they came from Europe. . . . They didn't in those days have any nuclear powered, polaris-type submarines, of course, but they had surface launched submarine war missiles. We felt that this was not the motivation of [Nikita S.] Khrushchev and that a limited response to a limited initiative was what was called for.

O'BRIEN: Well, then did you see it as basically an attempt to bolster Castro rather than any attempt to offset any missile gap--hate to use that term--but missile gap on their side?

GILPATRIC: Well, I think from the beginning it was clear to us that the Soviets wanted to force us to give up those Jupiter installations. And we felt some chagrin at not having dealt with that problem earlier because we knew how insecure they were and how unreliable as a true deterrent. And we knew the Soviets must realize that, and therefore they weren't; they were just straw men, really. We felt we were going to be asked, as we were ultimately, as a quid pro quo, to take those out, and that would have been a body blow to NATO, of course, and to our whole image. And we began thinking at a very early stage about, you know, alternatives to that. But we did one time--I remember I worked on this myself one evening in the second week, about Friday night, I guess, or maybe it was even Saturday night. No, I guess it was Friday night. We did develop a contingency plan for how we would take out those missiles and how we would communicate it and how we would present this to the world. And I remember working on a paper down in Mac Bundy's office while McNamara was drawing up the contingency plan for mobilizing and getting the forces ready to move into Cuba.

O'BRIEN: Well, as I understand it, Secretary McNamara has an early view that--and I wonder whether it's accurate--"a missile is a missile," is what's been quoted, that he's been quoted as saying. Is that a true indication that he doesn't see any great danger in them at that point, any more so than, let's say . . .

GILPATRIC: Well, he didn't have this apocalyptic view that some of the others had that the whole security equation had been changed overnight if these missiles were in there. He did see it as a very major setback to the grand alliance in general and to the United States in particular if Khrushchev could do this with impunity. But he regarded it more, I always felt, as a tactical move by Khrushchev rather than a grand strategy, an operation of grand strategy. And I think he believed that. I don't think it was just a question of equating his counterproposals to a limited form of action by Khrushchev. I think he started out with the latter and then moved to the former.

O'BRIEN: If I may draw an assumption here, then the foremost thing on his mind is the NATO alliance. Is that correct at this point?

GILPATRIC: Yes. That is the first: this risk that we would have to dismantle part of our then deterrent apparatus even though we'd written it off as obsolete in our own minds; and second, the freedom that this would appear to accord the Soviet Union to alter the spheres of influence in terms of moving into sort of the Monroe Doctrine area of our sphere. But he regarded that as a political rather than a military problem, getting back to the fact that the military threat had not basically changed.

O'BRIEN: I'm curious, do you see any hard intelligence, or do you have any good indications that this is what's on Khrushchev's mind at that point?

GILPATRIC: No.

O'BRIEN: Don't see anything?

GILPATRIC: No. Although this famous cable of his--that as far as I know has never been published, the one which is obviously a product of his own dictation because it was rambling, discursive, all kinds of crudities of humor and almost obscenity in it--did indicate to me that we were dealing with an opportunist, an adventurer, who was taking a big gamble. And it didn't seem part of a carefully

formulated mosaic of a plan at all. But that was in the final stages, and maybe, under tension, it didn't represent. . . . We never had any--even [Llewellyn E.] Tommy Thompson, who certainly was the most prescient of all the Kremlinologists (Chip Bohlen having left early in the game) and Thompson, of course, was always on the side of restrained, modulated moves; firm, but not raising the level of action or increasing the tension. But he was proceeding more or less from instinct and philosophy rather than from anything tangible in the way of knowledge.

O'BRIEN: Well, I was thinking in particular of the [Oleg V.] Penkovsky Papers, if they had given you any indication as to Soviet

GILPATRIC: Not to my recollection.

O'BRIEN: Secretary Rusk's role, as I understand it, has always been somewhat of an enigma to the rest of the people on the ExComm. How did you see him?

GILPATRIC: By that time I'd become accustomed to the fact that, except in the presence of the president when Rusk always would speak directly to the president and not to the group as sort of the first minister, Rusk did not take the leadership, even though he was entitled to as the first minister, in either a parliamentary sense or in an ideological sense. He had a reticence about expressing himself in the ExComm meetings. He was not nearly as voluble or communicative as some of the others were. And I never was quite certain in my own mind where he stood. I mean, it didn't come through. The others, you could pretty much identify. And it seemed to me he was reserving, as I say he'd done in the past, his expression of his views until we came before the president. I think he was reluctant to put himself into a role of debating. He reached his own conclusions, his own mind, listened very attentively, made comments, but never did, as McNamara did or as Ball did, Johnson did, Mac Bundy, many others, sort of, you know, take the initiative and expound a point of view and try to carry others with him. He never, as I recall it, acted in that way.

O'BRIEN: Well, over the period of the meetings of the ExComm, there's a good deal of strain, as I understand it, on all of you. Who holds up well?

GILPATRIC: Well, I don't recall anybody that showed up badly in the sense of completely losing their cool or responding irrationally or in anger or in contempt or derision. There were some overstatements. Some people--

Paul Nitze felt very strongly, he had a very strong emotional bias for military action. And, of course, Mac Bundy was a very cool, dispassionate dissector, layer-out of his ideas. He wasn't trying to carry anybody by his persuasion, force of position. My recollection of the whole occasion was that, in spite of the stresses and strains and in spite of these very deep differences, no one got into the kind of swinging arguments or antagonism I've seen so often in groups.

And again, I think it was the disciplinary presence of the attorney general. It was perfectly evident that he was keeping notes as to where everybody stood. I never knew what happened to those notes. I used to see he had initials of people and put after the initials some comments. He didn't keep detailed notes of everything that was said, but he was keeping some kind of a score sheet, a rating card. And it was perfectly evident that. . . . And then you have Theodore C. Ted Sorensen, who had very little to say, but who obviously had assimilated very quickly. Otherwise, he never could have overnight produced the president's talk or the basic format of it, as he did. I think having two people close to the president there tended to keep a certain order and, as I say, discipline.

And then you had people who themselves are very disciplined: McNamara, Doug Dillon, even George Ball. He writes much more strongly than he talks. When he makes a strong statement, he does it with a smile and sort of easy way. And the kinds of sessions we'd had, as I described last time, I guess it was, between Harriman and Nolting didn't take place at all, where people really took out after each other. I don't recall that.

O'BRIEN: Well, initially, you have probably more of a group or at least a larger number of people or at least a more concerted group in favor of the air strike, and then this, well, shift later towards the blockade. Why does that take place? Is it because of the arguments, because of the information that's pouring in?

GILPATRIC: I think it was a question of reflection, of an exchange of reasons and views. I think the fact that a man as articulate in exposition as McNamara is was consistent throughout couldn't help but have a convincing effect on a person like Doug Dillon or Mac Bundy, who shifted ground there. And for a non-lawyer, I don't know of any more effective advocate than McNamara is. He never changed his position. He never indicated that he had reservations about it, and I think that tended to pull people back from some of the extreme positions--opposite positions they'd taken.

O'BRIEN: Well, how about Bundy, you know, Bundy's changing

of position? Do you have a clear understanding of what was on Bundy's mind that week?

GILPATRIC: No, but I have to relate this to my observation of Mac generally. He tends to light initially on an absolute proposition. He thinks he should immediately see things in black and white terms, and he's very intolerant of obfuscation and ambiguity and uncertainty. And I think he just grasped at this initial concept of an air strike, and then he formulated arguments in support of it. And I think there was a case of reflection and sort of second-guessing himself, plus his respect for McNamara. Well, those are the only elements I can account for his change.

O'BRIEN: It's been suggested, too that Robert Kennedy was instrumental in turning one decision in the direction of a blockade. Do you have any reflections on that?

GILPATRIC: Well, he certainly was extremely effective against the air strike. As I recall it, though, in the initial discussions, the first couple of days, he did more listening than talking, and it wasn't till the lines had been drawn for everybody else that he came down. So I think that some of those who later came around didn't have the benefit of his thinking at the time they expressed themselves initially. But certainly, when it came to the final nose count, he, along with McNamara, was--I couldn't judge as to what went on in others' minds, know which of the two had the most effect, but certainly his eloquence about destroying the civilian population of Cuba. . . . He, by that time, was very skeptical of this claim by the military of precision bombing and "surgical operations."

O'BRIEN: Well, when did you become firm in your commitment towards the blockade?

GILPATRIC: Well, I started out with the feeling--which I had going back during the Kennedy administration--that we had passed a point in arms technology and in history where military force provided solutions except in the strictly deterrent sense. So I started out with the idea of avoiding any military action at all if we could. What other sanctions could we bring to bear? What countermoves politically, economically? And I chose this blockade, this limited quarantine kind of thing, as the minimum military action. I did favor the movement of forces, which I knew would be known to the Russians, to bring aircraft into the Florida bases and the East Coast bases, and shifting army units over from Fort Hood for an embarkation on the East Coast, just purely to telegraph some punches. I

don't recall some of the variations of the blockade theme, but I was, from the beginning, against any major military effort as the way to deal with the problem.

O'BRIEN: Well, you become involved in some of the Defense Department's efforts to survey some of the possible repercussions in Latin America, as I understand.
Was Edwin M. Ed Martin involved with you in that--part of it?

GILPATRIC: Yes, although I'm not clear in my mind, at the moment, just the exact juxtaposition of dates.

O'BRIEN: There were a number of decisions that had to be reached along the line before the actual decision, and one of those, of course, was what to do in regard to Andrei A. Gromyko and Gromyko's meeting with the president. How did you feel about that? Did you feel he should be confronted?

GILPATRIC: I wasn't consulted on that. That was not discussed in ExComm as a group. Some smaller groups were. . . . I don't know who the president talked to about that.

O'BRIEN: What's your greatest concern during the development of the crisis?

GILPATRIC: That it would set back what I felt was a trend, the beginnings of a trend, toward a series of reciprocal actions, parallel moves, toward defusing the arms race. I was very much involved throughout this period, beginning with the formation of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, with getting the military to think positively about arms limitation, either a total test ban or banning tests in the atmosphere. I was trying to get the military away from formulating absolutely impossible conditions. And I was instrumental in getting military types over working under William C. Bill Foster, not only for the effect they would have there, but for the play-back in the Pentagon. But what I didn't want to see happen as a result of this Cuban missiles situation was a complete setback to what seemed to me was the chance that we could at various stages in the world have some pullbacks or some decelerated moves.

O'BRIEN: Are you satisfied with the intelligence that's coming in during the missile crisis, intelligence you're getting within the committee and within the department?

GILPATRIC: Well, I never was satisfied with what we got-- intelligence--out of Cuba as such, leaving aside

ELINT and leaving as de aerial reconnaissance. The inability of our intelligence mechanisms to penetrate in any way, shape, or form into this island sitting thirty miles across from us always frustrated and alarmed me. I just didn't see how it could be we couldn't get more out of that. We knew more about Soviet Russia than we did about what was going on in Cuba.

O'BRIEN: Did you have any problem with secrecy or security in DOD, with your staff or anyone else, in regard to the leakage of this?

GILPATRIC: No, not that I'm aware of. I think it was really remarkable that up until just before the president went on the air so few people were aware of what was going on, certainly in the areas that I'm familiar with.

O'BRIEN: Well, actually, after the president gets on the air and this all becomes public, from that point on, are you optimistic that it's going to end without a major confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union in terms of war.

GILPATRIC: Well, our hopes went up and--I mean my feelings went up and down as the week went by. I suppose the low point was when Major [Rudolf, Jr.] Anderson was shot down. And then, of course, we had a plane penetrating the Soviet air spaces in Siberia, I guess it was. And I must say that during Friday and Saturday of that last week it was very hard to be optimistic because we didn't see any response, and the maneuvers, the actions, of the vessels that approached didn't set any clear pattern. We couldn't see what kind of instructions those skippers were operating under. And also, we knew of submarine activity in the area. We didn't know whether it was just purely for observation or whether some counteraction was planned against our ships.

O'BRIEN: There was one moment of panic, as I understand it, or at least great concern, when the Soviet Union attempted to fly an airplane into Cuba, wasn't it? Do you recall that?

GILPATRIC: Yes, when the airplane came down from Canada?

O'BRIEN: Yeah.

GILPATRIC: Yes. No one had any explanation for that, and all kinds of inferences and possibilities were suggested. I think that was a time when--in distinction to the control evidenced by the principals during the ExComm meetings prior to the presidential announcement--I do think it began to

tell on people, the strain did, in the sense that there was less control. This was a situation where we were in constant session with the president there. People were rushing in and rushing out.

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Several people were talking at once. This was nearly two weeks, you see, and there was an effect on people's physical stamina and composure.

O'BRIEN: Well, this is about ready to run out. I wonder if I could put another one on, and we could go for about five or ten minutes.

GILPATRIC: All right. Sure.

O'BRIEN: Will that be all right? [Interruption]
Well, how about when the telegram and the letter finally come from Khrushchev? What is your feelings at that point as to how they should be handled?

GILPATRIC: Well, I don't recall who first broached the notion that we would reply to one and not to the other. And at that stage the modus operandi was for two or three people to spin off and go off into another room and draft something. As I said, I was detached at one point, McNamara at another point, and we were constantly breaking up and re-forming throughout the afternoon and the evening, going down and having a meal in the White House Mess or having sandwiches or something. And it was almost continuous session. And we weren't operating entirely as one single group. And the work of drafting the responses was not part of my detail--I was working on these military contingency plans--so that I just know that there was a general agreement with this course of action, and it went through. Everybody'd sit around and mark up things, and then somebody would go off and come in with a clean copy. And at some stage, the president would just simply say, "Well, that's it; sign it off."

O'BRIEN: Did you have any great concern about the actual implementation of a blockade by the navy before the encounter between Admiral Anderson and Secretary McNamara?

GILPATRIC: Yes, because we couldn't get enough details of how the navy was going to carry out this operation. The reason we went over to Admiral Anderson's office that evening was because we weren't being told anything; we were just being assured that this overall type of action was being implemented, and the navy would take care of everything.

And so knowing how. . . . At that stage we'd been in office twenty-one months, and we knew the navy to be pretty heavy-handed. They were still conducting themselves as sort of proconsuls in their own domain, and I and McNamara were both very apprehensive as to the kind of instructions that were going out. Presumably, they were all being done out of Norfolk, SACLANC /Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic/, and we weren't being shown any of the actual messages.

And even when the chart room was set up to show the exact movements of the vessels that were approaching the quarantine, it was done in the navy, and we found several cases where they didn't portray actually on this board what we learned through DIA /Defense Intelligence Agency/ was the case. There was some discrepancy. We just weren't sure that they were operating on the basis of the very latest information. They'd run off a position at 1800 hours and operate on that for the next six or eight or twelve hours rather than constantly keep adjusting to moment by moment developments, it would seem.

O'BRIEN: Did they offer any resistance to the revision of the line closer to the continental limits?

GILPATRIC: As I recall it, there was a running argument over every phase of it. And it wasn't so much that we had a different or a better idea, but they couldn't explain or justify what they were doing in any rational way. As we would probe and question and express doubts and ask for more information, they would keep changing. And so the notion came up in one's mind that they were improvising, and they didn't have any really good planning base for the way they were going about it.

O'BRIEN: Well, what happened when McNamara walked in the room?

GILPATRIC: Well, we'd been in the room, the chart room or whatever they call the room which had plotted the movements of the ships and so forth, and Admiral Anderson was not in the room. But one of the navy briefing officers wasn't able to respond to questions as to what one of our commanders would do if a Soviet ship approached, didn't respond to our signals, didn't stop, or fired when boarded, didn't cooperate--a whole series of possibilities. Got no answers at all. So McNamara asked that we talk to Admiral Anderson.

We went into his room, and he had a phalanx of fifteen or twenty, at least, navy brass all lined up around him. We were the two civilians. And Anderson was very high in color

and obviously very, very angry about the whole, what he regarded, intrusion. And he listened to a whole series of questions from McNamara that he hadn't got answers to. And then Anderson just sort of exploded. And I don't know whether he said goddamn it, but he used some very strong expletive to the effect that, "This is none of your goddamn business. This is what we're here to do. We know how to do this. We're doing this ever since the days of John Paul Jones, and if you'll just go back to your quarters, Mr. Secretary, we'll take care of this." And during this tirade I could see the color rising in McNamara's countenance, and I didn't know whether he was going to reply in kind or whether he was going to, as he did do, just get up and say good night, which he did.

And then, in about half an hour, as I recall it, an emissary from the CNO [Chief of Naval Operations] came over and wanted to get the questions in more detail, and gradually, the cooler heads and wiser counsel prevailed in that part of the Pentagon. From that point on, they were submitting, asking approvals. As I recall it, about every three hours, we'd have a session. But for the most part, unless he'd want to go over and see the graphic portrayal of the ship movements, it was all done in the secretary's office from then on.

O'BRIEN: Well, McNamara really accomplished what he wanted then.

GILPATRIC: He really accomplished what he wanted, and he didn't cause, at that stage, Admiral Anderson to lose face, which I think was wise because it wouldn't have helped matters to have had a confrontation between the civilian control and the military command.

O'BRIEN: What's his private feelings at that point?

GILPATRIC: Well, he told me on the way back: "That's the end of Anderson. I'll never. . . . He won't be reappointed, and we've got to find a replacement for him. As far as I'm concerned, he's lost my confidence."

And of course, it wasn't until the end of that year, I guess it was December--and I was the one that was delegated to tell Anderson. I'd previously suggested to Kennedy to make him an ambassador, and since Portugal had this maritime tradition from the days of Henry the Navigator, that'd be a good place for Anderson. When I went to see him, I had Fred Korth with me. We went to the CNO's quarters. And Anderson flew into a rage, accused Korth of undermining him, didn't take out after me, but he did scornfully reject the idea that he would take on an ambassadorship. But he called

me up two days later and wanted to know if the offer was still open. And of course, he did take it, and in my opinion, he did a very good job on duty there.

O'BRIEN: Was the president as concerned as McNamara about the actual implementation of the blockade? Were the questions coming from the president that McNamara was asking?

GILPATRIC: No, no. McNamara pretty much kept the initiative on that. And once the operation was under way, that was one case where we kept ahead of inquiries from Mac Bundy and others and the president.

O'BRIEN: Anyone on the rest of the committee that was concerned about the implementation of the blockade in an informal way.

GILPATRIC: I don't believe so. As I recall it, the cockpit of controversy was right within the Pentagon.

O'BRIEN: Well, we've covered a number of things, and I suppose that right now is the best place to break off. Well, thank you, Mr. Gilpatric, for a very informative interview.

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And also, he was a very strong proponent, if I recall it, of the MLF [multilateral force], when that got going. I think he regarded NATO as his own creation. He was present at it, anyway. And I don't know whether he was wrong or not. I was always skeptical of the MLF from the beginning, but I saw that it might serve a political purpose to talk about it and plan for it and get the Europeans engaged in a form of exercise that seemed to be moving towards something. I was sure in my own mind that it would never materialize. Of course, it wasn't until Johnson that it was shot down, I guess largely based on the analysis that Dick Neustadt made.

O'BRIEN: Well, how do you get around Acheson, or do you ever get around Acheson on particularly . . .

GILPATRIC: Well, sometimes you would just bore him. For example, during the sessions of ExComm in the course of the Cuban missile crisis, he just got fed up with all this brainstorming of things and everybody thinking out loud. He liked to, you know, make a pronouncement and knock down any opposing ideas, which he did, as I say, very masterfully, and then depart the scene. He didn't want to spend a lot of time. So he sort of came and went. I mean he would be brought in and sent to Europe to help educate de Gaulle. I guess he went to France, primarily. But if he was there in full force and wanted to make an issue of it, no frontal attack would overcome him.

He and McNamara did not particularly hit it off. And of course, I had not been his candidate for the deputy; Paul Nitze was Acheson's man. He didn't think my qualifications were as good as Paul's. So I had a few run-ins with him, although I have a great respect and affection for him.

O'BRIEN: Well, are you in agreement, essential agreement, then, in early 1961, on this idea that he proposes that there should be some kind of an instant military response in regard to some kind of a cut-off in Berlin?

GILPATRIC: Yes. I think he was basically against the flexible response, but he recognized that the president was hung-up on that, and he had to deal with it in other ways. He wrote a number of brilliant analyses. I mean he would prepare these papers, and they became sort of gospel. And I don't know whether the president necessarily bought them, but no one was brash enough to redo the work. As long as Acheson was pressing them, they were the current doctrine. I remember once I drew a letter of instructions to Norstad, who was acting sort of like a proconsul in Outer Gaul. The president didn't know how to deal with him, to bring him under control.

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you know, the [Carmino G.] DeSapio. He thought that no one had done what he had done in Massachusetts, modernized the machinery and brought in some new blood. He had a respect for [Jacob K.] Javits. He had no use for [Kenneth B.] Keating, not only because Keating, you know, spread all those stories before the Cuban missile crisis, but also because Keating really wasn't very long on intellect. And in light of hindsight, perhaps, I think he was figuring, somehow, something's got to be done about New York: "How are we going to get in there and do it?" Certainly, it didn't take the Kennedy machine long, after his death, to begin to focus on Bobby and press him into moving up here.

O'BRIEN: Well, was there something in the works before the assassination?

GILPATRIC: Nothing specific, but I talked a number of times to Larry O'Brien and Kenny O'Donnell about personalities up here. Of course, I've never been involved in the Democratic club or lower level; I've been on the state or the mayoralty level. But they were probing around, obviously, for they recognized that New York was a key state, and it wasn't well organized from the Democratic standpoint.

O'BRIEN: Did the president ever talk about [Barry M.] Goldwater or Nixon or Lyndon Johnson?

GILPATRIC: No. He was very. . . . He'd occasionally make some jokes about Lyndon Johnson. Not unkindly jokes, but poking fun at him in a gentle way. But he seemed to me to have a real respect for Johnson's political savvy. He was always telling McNamara, "Now you go talk to Lyndon about this," or "Talk to the vice president about this." And when he brought Johnson into the sessions at Palm Beach or at Hyannis Port or any other informal setting outside the White House, a lot of kidding went on. And he liked to just talk politics with Johnson, no question. I remember one day sitting on the fantail of the yacht down there out in Palm Beach for the day. I bet he spent two or three hours going from state to state and just dredging out of Johnson every bit of the latest political gossip and lore that he could elicit. There's no question that he loved to talk politics, eat, sleep, drink politics. And it was just because of my connection with New York and because nobody else had any particular intimacy with the Rockefellers that I got into it. Certainly, it was a never failing pastime.

O'BRIEN: Were there any other political people that entered into your conversations that he admired or didn't